

XLIII.—*Recent Ornithological Publications.*

1. ENGLISH PUBLICATIONS.

WE have been much pleased with Mr. Atkinson's little work on "British Birds' Nests and Eggs*." It is essentially a 'Boy's own book,' and well intended to train up a youthful oologist in the way he should go. The author has been a life-long observer of a good school, and this is nearly sufficient for his purpose. It is, therefore, of comparatively little moment to his readers that, when he quotes from other works, his information is sometimes defective. Mr. Atkinson makes no show of learned acquirements, but he is far above the common run of popular writers, to whom a Latin name is an abomination. After a few judicious remarks on the necessity of, and the vulgar objections to, anything like scientific terminology, he observes well enough (p. 4), "No one was ever the worse for learning habits of orderly and systematic arrangement, even though he had to pay the price of doing a little puzzling headachy work, and had to bother himself with a good many ugly-looking, ill-sounding, jaw-cracking words." The illustrations are quite as good as could have been expected for the price, but being only woodcuts are not extremely characteristic. The printing we hope may be improved in a future edition, when a little more care may well be bestowed in hunting up later authorities than those cited.

2. FRENCH PUBLICATIONS.

It is only lately that we have succeeded in seeing a copy of M. Morelet's work on the Natural History of the Azores†, which is of much interest, as containing the first and only detailed account that has as yet been given of the zoology of this little-known group of islands. True it is they have been visited by several travellers, who have placed on record various facts of greater or less interest concerning their geology and botany; but hardly any one, except Mr. Darwin (who touched at Terceira in

* British Birds' Nests and Eggs, popularly described. By the Rev. J. C. Atkinson, &c. Illustrated by W. S. Coleman. London: Routledge & Co., 1861. Post 8vo. pp. 120. Price *One Shilling*!

† Notice sur l'Histoire Naturelle des Açores, suivie d'une description des Mollusques terrestres de cet Archipel, par Arthur Morelet. 1 vol. 8vo. Paris, 1860.

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the "Beagle"), and Dr. Tams and Dr. Albers, who subsequently collected a certain number of mollusks in these islands at two different epochs, has even alluded to their zoology. M. Arthur Morelet, already well known to science for his labours in conchology, and for the collections in other branches of natural history with which he has enriched the French National Museum in the Jardin des Plantes, visited the Azores in 1857, in company with M. Drouet, with the object of studying the Malacological fauna of the Archipelago, and passed six months in this occupation. The volume now published contains the results of their investigations into this branch of zoology, and at the same time gives a general sketch of the whole fauna, though M. Morelet acknowledges with regret that they did not pay much attention to other objects besides those to which they particularly devoted themselves.

It is well known that when the Azores, so named from the abundance of hawks (*Açores*, Latinè *Astures*) met with upon them when first visited, were occupied by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century, these islands did not possess any human inhabitants. What is still more surprising, is that, with the exception of birds, they were also destitute of any species of vertebrated animal, and that at the present moment the only indigenous mammal is a species of Bat (*Vespertilio leisleri*), probably imported from the North of Europe. The Avi-fauna of the Azores embraces, according to M. Morelet, about 30 species of residents and regular visitors, which are all strictly of the European type. The Woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*), the Red Partridge (*Caccabis rufa*), the Quail (*Coturnix dactylisonans*), the Wood Pigeon, and certain Water-fowl, are common, and render to the islanders an abundant supply of game in the season. The other birds are mostly, as far as M. Morelet can tell us, of common and well-known species; though, singularly enough, the only two of which, as we believe, M. Morelet brought home examples, are of great interest, being, one, a new species of true Finch (*Fringilla moreleti*), and the other the larger European Bullfinch, named by M. de Selys *Pyrrhula coccinea*. We have already* noticed Dr. Pucheran's notes on these two species, which

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* Ibis, 1859, p. 322, et 1860, p. 93.

have been published in the 'Revue et Magasin de Zoologie.' But we wish to urge the prosecution of a further investigation of the zoology of the Azores, and of an accurate comparison of specimens of the resident species with their European correspondents, as it is far from improbable that other instances may be found of specific or quasi-specific differences between them and the present inhabitants of the adjoining continent.

3. GERMAN PUBLICATIONS.

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"Naturalists," says Dr. Hartlaub, in his introduction to this work, "as well botanists as zoologists, have been long accustomed to consider Madagascar as a land of wonders and promise. The genera *Ouwirandra*, *Ravenalia*, and *Angræcum* of the former are rivalled by the anomalous forms *Chiromys*, *Eupleres*, *Euryceros*, *Mesites*, and *Atelornis* of the latter. Indeed the peculiarity of the animals that people this island, considered in relation to its geographical extent, is so great that we cannot be surprised when Isidore Geoffroy St.-Hilaire looks upon it, in respect of the idiosyncrasy of its fauna, as a fifth continent, and Hombron declares it to be one of the centres of creation of the African plateau. We are now aware that, out of about 50 species of mammals known to us from Madagascar, one or two only are met with also in Africa, and that of the 203 birds, of which the following work will make mention, not less than 97 are to be treated of as exclusively confined to the island."

Flacourt, in his 'Histoire de la grande isle Madagascar,' published at Paris in 1661, is the first author who treats of the birds of Madagascar, and gives us a list of 60 species said to be found there, the greater number of which, however, being unaccompanied by descriptions, are now irre recognizable. On the

* Ornithologischer Beitrag zur Fauna Madagascar's, mit Berücksichtigung der Inseln Mayotta, Nossi-be und S. Marie, so wie der Mascarenen und Seychellen, von Dr. G. Hartlaub. 1 vol. 8vo. Bremen, 1861, 88 pp.

other hand, the worthy Brisson's descriptions of the 38 species of birds from Madagascar, principally taken from specimens sent by Poivre to the Reaumurian collection, are, as is always the case with that author, very full and complete, and may be relied upon as indicating valid species, though some of them have not been found again up to the present time. Sonnerat, in his 'Voyage à la Chine,' Desjardins in the 'Proceedings' of the Société d'Hist. Nat. de l'isle Maurice, and Dr. A. Smith in the 'South-African Quarterly Journal,' were the next succeeding contributors to the ornithology of Madagascar, but none of them to any very great extent. But about twenty-five years ago a new and happier era for our knowledge of this ornithology began with the labours of several French travellers and savants. Victor Sganzin, at one time Commandant of the French island of St. Marie, on the eastern coast of Madagascar, who has published his notes on the mammals and birds observed during his residence there, in the Memoirs of the N. H. Society of Strasburg, was one of the earliest of these. Bernier, Goudot, and Rousseau, three well-known names among those of the Naturaliste-voyageurs who have contributed so largely to the enrichment of the French National Collection, succeeded Sganzin in his explorations. Their many brilliant discoveries have been made known to the world by the scientific labours of I. Geoffroy St.-Hilaire, de Lafresnaye, and Pucheran. In 1848 Dr. Hartlaub turned his special attention towards the ornithology of Madagascar, and published a complete *résumé* of what was then known on the subject in the first volume of D'Alton and Burmeister's 'Zeitung für Zoologie.' As it will be observed that Dr. Hartlaub has in his present work nearly doubled his list of species, it will be evident that our knowledge of this peculiar fauna has been considerably increased since that period. This has been effected partly by the labours of the Austrian botanist Bojer and Madame Ida Pfeiffer, whose specimens have been deposited in the Vienna Museum, and critically examined for Dr. Hartlaub's work by A. v. Pelzeln, partly by small collections made by William Jardine (son of Sir William Jardine) at Bojanna Bay, and by Prof. Peters at St. Augustin's Bay, and partly by closer investigations of the Museums of Paris, Vienna, Leyden,

Stuttgart, and Philadelphia, which have been made by Dr. Hartlaub himself, with the assistance of Jules Verreaux, v. Pelzeln, Schlegel, Krauss, Heuglin, and Cassin.

We have already noticed the fact, that out of the 203 Madagascar birds enumerated by Dr. Hartlaub, 97 are exclusively confined to the island. The eccentricity of this fauna is, however, still further demonstrated by the fact that no less than 29 of the genera to which these birds are referable are also forms purely Madagascarian, and not met with in the adjoining continent or elsewhere. Some of these genera, it is true, may be said to be founded upon slight peculiarities; but others, such as *Brachypteracias*, *Atelornis*, *Falculia*, *Philepitta*, *Oriolia*, *Euryceros*, *Mesites*, &c., are possessed of such ambiguous characters that their position in the natural series is still in many cases unsettled. That Madagascar has something in common with Africa may be inferred from the fact that 42 of its species of birds also occur on the mainland of the continent. But, on the other hand, Dr. Hartlaub points out that the families *Musophagidæ*, *Lamprotornithidæ*, *Buphagidæ*, *Bucerotidæ*, and others, besides many genera which are especially characteristic of African ornithology, are not met with in Madagascar. With regard to the views of Geoffroy St.-Hilaire and Pucheran, that this fauna has something in common with India, Dr. Hartlaub remarks on the occurrence in Madagascar of *Ninox*, *Ploceus*, *Copsychus*, and *Hypsipetes*, as well as of several well-known Indian species. But it has always remained a doubtful point to us, whether the presence of *some* of these may not be attributable to introduction by man's agency or some other means.

After giving this imperfect account of the many interesting statements contained in Dr. Hartlaub's introduction to his little book, we have only to say, in conclusion, that the Synopsis of species is worked out in our author's usual accurate and painstaking style, and forms a worthy companion to his well-known volume on the Birds of Western Africa. Short but well-drawn diagnoses are given of all the birds peculiar to the island, as also ample synonymy and references, and, in fact, every particular which such a handbook of the ornithology of a local district ought to embrace. We sincerely hope this may not be

the last local Avi-fauna which Dr. Hartlaub may treat in a similar manner.

A continuation of the third part of "Museum Heineanum," by Dr. Cabanis and Herr F. Heine, jun., lately issued, for an early copy of which we are much indebted to Herr Heine, completes the enumeration of the *Strisores* in this fine collection, and contains a portion of the Index of genera and species.

The eighth 'Lieferung' of Dr. Reichenbach's 'Handbuch der Speciellen Ornithologie' completes his account of the COLUMBARIÆ—a group composed of *Columbæ*, the family *Cracidæ* (of the order *Gallinæ*), and the *Cariamas* (belonging to the *Grallæ*), according to Dr. Reichenbach's fantastical arrangement.

The plates issued herewith form a continuation of the series of illustrations of the *Trochilidæ*, a portion of which was published some time ago. The work, as far as it is a compilation, is sometimes useful, as one of reference, but we cannot conscientiously say much in favour of such portions of it as are founded upon original research.

Besides the account of the new Cassowary, to which we have already alluded (*anteà*, p. 312), the first number of the 'Journal für Ornithologie' for the present year (the last we have received) contains an article on the breeding of the Nutcracker by Baron Richard König-Warthausen, which will be interesting to many of our readers. The author seems to think it a well-ascertained fact that this bird breeds regularly in the Black Forest*, though he has not yet been able to get authentic eggs from this locality in spite of many efforts. Baldamus states that it breeds in Transylvania; but the only egg brought back by him from his expedition into that country proves, according to Baron König-Warthausen, to be that of a Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*). Abbé Caire, however, has obtained eggs of the Nutcracker in the French Alps, "of undoubted authenticity," of which the Baron has compared together six examples—four belonging to his own

* See Landbek's Systematische Aufzählung der Vögel Württemberg's, p. 19.

collection, two to Dr. Baldamus, and one to Herr Bädeker. The latter specimen has already been described and figured by Herr Bädeker in the 'Journal für Ornithologie' (1856, p. 32, pl. 1). While on this subject, it may be remarked, that we cannot believe that any active Englishman going early enough to Switzerland would have much difficulty in obtaining eggs of this bird. We have never failed to see it in abundance during our somewhat frequent visits to the higher Alps (for example, in the upper valley of Lauterbrünnen, and on the Riffelberg near Zermatt), and we have been assured by the Swiss guides that it breeds there every spring, nesting in the Arven-trees (*Pinus cembra*). In these localities it is so much devoted to the cones of this Pine as to have obtained the name of "Arven-vogel."

4. AMERICAN PUBLICATIONS.

Mr. G. N. Lawrence has kindly furnished us with copies of two ornithological communications to the Lyceum of Natural History of New York, which have been reprinted from their 'Annals.'

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The first is a Catalogue of Birds collected along the Panama-Railway route by Mr. McLeannan. It enumerates 142 species, amongst which are several described as new. The occurrence of a Barbet (*Capito*) so far north has not been previously recorded, and we hail with pleasure the acquisition of a new and apparently brilliant addition to the genus. Several species are also noted that have been lately described by Mr. Cassin in his account of the birds collected during the Darien expedition by Lieut. Michler. Mr. Lawrence having kindly offered to send us a series of the species, as here described, for examination, we hope to be able to give some further remarks on receipt of the specimens. Taking this collection in connexion with that of the Darien expedition and Dr. Hoffman's collections in Costa Rica, which are now being worked at by Dr. Cabanis, we may soon hope to arrive at a more perfect knowledge of the Avi-fauna of the Central-American isthmus, which has as yet been left comparatively uninvestigated.

Mr. Lawrence's second paper contains a description of two new birds from Panama (*Grallaria perspicillata* and *Polioptila*

superciliaris) and of a Humming-bird from Venezuela—*Chlorostilbon nitens*.

Mr. D. G. Elliott of New York, F.Z.S., has lately published the first part of an illustrated Monograph of the genus *Pitta*, of which we shall give a notice in our next Number.

The second portion of M. Le Moine's little book on the Ornithology of Canada* has reached us. That this work has attracted attention in Canada is evident from the fact that the first edition is out of print, and that M. Le Moine has already issued a second edition of part 1, of which we have also received a copy.

XLIV.—*Extracts from Correspondence, Announcements, &c.*

DR. F. HOCHSTETTER informs us that he has been busy in arranging the series of bones of the Moas (*Dinornis*, &c.) which he collected in New Zealand during his sojourn there with the Novara-expedition. Dr. Gustav Jäger has completed the restoration of the skeleton of *Palapteryx ingens*, and prepared sets of plaster casts of all its bones, complete sets of which may be obtained on application to him at Vienna for about £12. The bird stands about $6\frac{3}{4}$ feet in height. Drs. Hochstetter and Jäger have also prepared for exhibition skeletons of *Dinornis giganteus*, *D. robustus*, *D. elephantopus*, and *D. didiformis*.

"*Palapteryx ingens*," says Dr. Hochstetter, "(which is four-toed, like *Apteryx*), has certainly been exterminated but few generations ago. I am of opinion that when New Zealand was first peopled from the Tonga Islands, about 600 years ago, several species of these giant birds (among which was *Palapteryx ingens*) were still in existence; that these large birds were hunted by the natives and supplied them with flesh, as their songs and traditions abundantly testify; and that the failure of this supply induced them, about 100 years ago, to resort to the disgusting practice of cannibalism, which Cook found so prevalent there."

The following are extracts from Mr. Blyth's letters:—

"Calcutta, April 14th, 1861.

"My genus *Nitidula*, of which I sent a description some time

* Ornithologie de Canada, par J. M. Le Moine. Quebec, 1861, 12mo. 398 pp.